

THE GIFT OF THE JEWS
ROMANS 11:11-24

BIG IDEA: CHRISTIANS OWE THE JEWS A DEBT OF GRATITUDE & ATTRACTIVE WITNESS

INTRODUCTION:

- A. For 2000 years the Jews have been having a rough go of it.
- B. **MCQUAID:** *Alarmingly, parts of Europe are now so awash in malicious anti-Semitism that graffiti and placards declare, "Jews, return to the ovens!"*
How, in the realm of reason, common sense, and rational thinking can such bizarre actions be explained? The answer is as old as Jewry itself: Hatred for Israel and the Jewish people is satanically inspired. The fantasy of the "final solution to the Jewish problem" did not originate with Hitler and the Nazis. It is the story of the ages.¹
- C. **TWAIN:** *For I am without prejudice. It is my hope that both the Christians and the Jews will be damned; and to that end I am working all my influence. Help me pray... If I have any leaning it is toward the Jew, not the Christian. (There is one thing I'd like to say, but I dasn't: Christianity has deluged the world with blood and tears--Judaism has caused neither for religion's sake.) I've had hard luck with them.*
- Mark Twain's Correspondence with Henry Huddleston Rogers

The Jew is a money getter; and in getting his money he is a very serious obstruction to less capable neighbors who are on the same quest.
- "Concerning the Jews"

WHAT WE OWE THE JEWS

- A. Gratitude for Our Salvation **VERSE 11a**, Again I ask [**lit., Therefore**]: *Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles...*
1. **THOMAS CAHILL:** *For better or worse, the role of the West in humanity's history is singular. Because of this, the role of the Jews, the inventors of Western culture, is also singular: there is simply no one else remotely like them; theirs is a unique vocation. Indeed...the very idea of vocation, of a personal destiny, is a Jewish idea.²*
 2. **Ephesians 2:11-22** *Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)--¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,¹⁵ by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,¹⁶ and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in*

¹ Elwood McQuaid, "Imperishable Remnants," *Israel My Glory*, May/June 2009, 8.

² Thomas Cahill, *The Gifts of the Jews* (NY: Doubleday: 1998), 3.

the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

2. **BARCLAY:** *The temple consisted of a series of courts, each one a little higher than the one that went before, with the Temple itself in the inmost of the courts. First there was the Court of the Gentiles; then the Court of the Women; then the Court of the Israelites; then the Court of the Priests; and then the Holy Place itself. Only into the first of them could a Gentile come. Between it and the Court of the Women there was a wall, or rather a kind of screen of marble, beautifully wrought, and let into it at intervals there were tablets which announced that if a Gentile proceeded any farther he was liable to instant death. [Josephus in *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 15, 11, 5] ...says of the second court of the Temple: "This was encompassed by a stone wall for a partition, with an inscription which forbade any foreigner to go in under pain of death".... In 1871 one of these prohibiting tablets was actually discovered, and the inscription on it reads: "Let no one of any other nation come within the fence and barrier around the Holy Place. Whosoever will be taken doing so will himself be responsible for the fact that his death will ensue."³*

B. Compellingly Attractive Witness **VERSE 11b**, ...to make Israel envious. **VERSE 14**, in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.

1. **MORRIS:** *It is a matter for profound regret that just as Israel refused to accept this salvation when it was offered to them, so the Gentiles have all too often refused to make Israel envious.*
2. History of anti-Semitism
 - **EARLY CHURCH FATHERS:**
 - *Melito of Sardis (120-185) was the first to accuse the Jews of murdering God when he wrote, "God has been murdered, the King of Israel slain by an Israelite hand. {in his, *On the Passover*} By the fourth century, anti-Semitism among the church fathers had become commonplace."⁴*
 - *John Chrysostom (344-407), patriarch of Constantinople and outstanding preacher of his day, wrote eight sermons that voiced a violent hatred of the Jews based on the Christ-killer accusation: "The Jews are the most worthless of all men. They are perfidious murderers of Christ. They worship the devil, their religion is a sickness. The Jews are the odious assassin of Christ and for killing God there is no expiation possible, no indulgence or pardon. Christians may never cease vengeance, and the Jews must live in servitude forever. God always hated the Jews. It is incumbent upon all Christians to hate the Jews."⁵*
 - **POPE PAUL IV:** *Locked by night within the Ghetto by order of Paul IV in the sixteenth century, they were dragooned by subsequent popes into listening to Christian sermons and giving up all trades save moneylending, scrap metal, and rag."⁶*
 - **DAVID LEVY:** *During the [American] colonial period, old European stereotypes were manifested. Jews were considered mysterious, outsiders, and heretics. During the Civil War, newspapers and political leaders falsely accused Jews of aiding the enemy, smuggling, profiteering during the war, and draft dodging in both the North and the South.*

³ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press: 1958), 130-131.

⁴ Michael Rydelnik, "Who Are the Christ Killers?", *Moody*, October 1985, 38.

⁵ Rydelnik, 38-39.

⁶ Cahill, 6.

In the 1870s, anti-Semitism took the form of social discrimination. Jews were refused admittance to certain hotels, clubs, places of residence, private schools, institutions, and associations that conferred prestige and status. This was a form of social discrimination by the wealthy class of Gentiles designed to keep Jews in their place.

Anti-Semitic literature began to appear in the 1920s, such as The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and he Dearborn Independent, a magazine owned by Henry Ford. In 1924 the Ku Klux Klan came into being and was a major source of harassment to the Jewish community through their speeches and literature.

The 1930s brought an upsurge of anti-Semitism, spurred by the Depression and the rise of Nazism.⁷

3. **LUTHER** in his pamphlet, *On the Jews and Their Lies (Von den Juden und ihren Lugen)*: ..published in Wittenberg, may be termed the first work of modern anti-Semitism, and a giant step forward on the road to the Holocaust. "First," he urged, "their synagogues should be set on fire, and whatever is left should be buried in dirt so that no one may ever be able to see a stone or cinder of it." Jewish prayer books should be destroyed and rabbis forbidden to preach. Then the Jewish people should be dealt with, their homes 'smashed and destroyed' and their inmates 'put under one roof or in a stable like gypsies, to teach them they are not masters in our land'. Jews should be banned from the roads and markets, their property seized and then these 'poisonous envenomed worms' should be drafted into forced labour and made to earn their bread 'by the sweat of their noses'. In the last resort they should simply be kicked out 'for all time'.⁸

4. **FRED HARTMAN**: Unfortunately, it was in the name of Jesus that their forefathers were persecuted, their families separated, and hundreds of thousands were put to death. In that sense, the name of Jesus is offensive to these people.

They have heard from childhood the stories of terrible hardships brought upon their people by the Crusaders, as they marched across Europe slaughtering entire Jewish villages in the name of Jesus and calling Jews "Christ killers." At the same time, those armies were on their way to "free" Jerusalem from the "infidels."

History also recalls the Spanish Inquisition, which began in 1492 and brought death, deportation, and separation of Jewish families unless the Jewish people agreed to be baptized as "Christians."

Then there is the haunting memory of the horrible Holocaust perpetrated by Nazi Germany, in which nearly six million Jewish people died. In the minds of many people, Adolph Hitler is portrayed as a Christian; therefore, these deaths are seen as the result of Christian hostility toward Jews....

A common conclusion among Jewish people is that for 2,000 years Jesus and Christianity have brought them little but trouble. To them, the name of Jesus has meant heartache. A rabbi once said, "If Christianity has nothing more to offer than it has for the last 2,000 years, I want nothing to do with it."⁹

5. **CONTEMPORARY**: I was seven years old when I first heard of Christ. While walking to school, I was accosted by a group of older boys. As they shoved and hit me, they taunted, "You dirty Christ-killing Jew boy! You killed Jesus!" "Why do they think I killed him?" I later sobbed to my mother. "I don't even know who he is!"¹⁰

⁷ David M. Levy, "The American Jew: Stranger in Our Midst," *Israel My Glory*, Oct/Nov 1991, 13.

⁸ Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (NY: Harper and Row Publishers, 1987. 242.

⁹ Fred Hartman, "Jesus in Modern Judaism," *Israel My Glory*, Decv/Jan 1995/1996, 15.

¹⁰ Rydelnik, 38.

C. Confidence in their Future **VERSE 12**, *But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, **how much greater riches will their fullness bring!*** **VERSE 15**, *For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their **acceptance** be but life from the dead?*

1. *Excising Israel from the huge segment of the Bible delineating God's promises to the Chosen People—past, present, and future—is a popular trend today among Protestantism's theological luminaries. The growing Replacement Theology mutation of God's Word gives evidence that even some touted evangelical leaders have followed the pack of "God is through with Israel" ranters¹¹.*
2. *"If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one per cent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star-dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also away out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers.*

He has made a marvelous fight in this world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it. The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished.

The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"¹²

D. Gratitude for Paul **VERSE 13**, *I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the **apostle to the Gentiles**, I make much of my ministry*

E. Humility as Latecomers **VERSES 16-18**, *If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.¹⁷ If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root,¹⁸ **do not boast** over those branches. If you do, **consider this**: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.*

1. *If you see a turtle on a fencepost, you know somebody put him there.*
2. **MORRIS** sees a reference here in **Verse 16** to **Numbers 15:20-21** *Present a cake from the first of your ground meal and present it as an offering from the threshing floor.²¹ Throughout the generations to come you are to give this offering to the LORD from the first of your ground meal.*
 - **MORRIS** also believes that the "holy root" (Verse 16), and the "nourishing sap" (Verse 18) both refer to the Patriarchs, principally Abraham.

¹¹ Ibid., 8.

¹² Mark Twain, "Concerning The Jews," Harper's Magazine, March, 1898 (1835-1910), US writer. http://philosemitism.blogspot.com/2007/08/concerning-jews-by-mark-twain-harpers_09.html. Accessed 051709.

3. **MORRIS ON VERSE 17:** *The normal process was to take a shoot from an olive that bears good fruit though it does not grow vigorously and graft it onto a wild olive stock, whose fruit is poor but which grows strongly. The result is a tree with vigorous growth which bears good olives. Paul, however, talks of the reverse process, of grafting a wild olive onto the stock of a good olive and later even of grafting back some of the good olive branches that have been cut out. All this has led to some caustic comments on Paul's knowledge of what went on in olive orchards. To this two things may be said. One is that Paul is well aware that what he is talking about is "contrary to nature" (v. 24); he is not referring to something that went on every day in the olive orchards he passed. The other is that there is evidence that the grafting of a wild olive into a good olive tree is not as daft as many commentators have assumed. When an old olive tree had lost its vigor, it seems that one remedy in antiquity was to cut away the failing branches and graft in some wild olive shoots. The result was aid to be the reinvigoration of the failing tree.*

WHAT WE SHOULD LEARN FROM THE JEWS [CF STEARNS ON JUDGMENT LETTER FROM JESUS]

- A. God's Election Is Not to Our Credit **VERSES 19-20a**, *You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." ²⁰ Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith.*

 1. **THE HOUND FROM HEAVEN**--One man who ignored and fled from God for many years, finally turned in faith to the Lord and found out what it was like to be on the good side of God. He thought how through all those lonely, wayward years the Holy Spirit had been lovingly pursuing him like a relentless Hound of Heaven. Then Frances Thompson, an opium using, unhealthy bootmaker got off the edge of the bed, faced his loving pursuer and wrote these words,

*I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him down the arches of the years;
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes, I sped;
And shot, precipitated
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat - and a Voice beat
More instant than the feet -
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."
---Francis Thompson, 1983*

- B. Salvation Requires Perseverance **VERSES 20b-22**, but be afraid. [**MORRIS:** "fear" in the sense of reverent awe.] ²¹ *For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. ²² Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.*
 1. **CALVIN:** Paul is not...discussing here the special election of each individual, but is setting the Gentiles and Jews in opposition to one another. (In Morris, 416)
 2. **MORRIS:** His hypothetical Gentile has no mortgage on the blessing. Jewish branches were cut off on account of unbelief; why should he think he is immune? There is no room for smug complacency.

3. Cf. the threats to the Seven Churches of Asia in Revelation 2, 3.
- C. Never Say “Never” about Anybody **VERSES 23-24**, *And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be **grafted in**, for **God is able** to graft them in again.* ²⁴ *After all, **if you** were cut out of an olive tree that is **wild** by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will **these**, the **natural** branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!*
1. *“Some want to live within the sound
Of church or chapel bell.
I want to run a rescue shop
Within a yard of hell.”*
-C.T. Studd
 2. *The truth is that, contrary to what many assume, there was never a time when all of Israel was in rebellion against God. A believing remnant, though often small, was always there.*
Today’s church is a body of twin remnants of Jews and Gentiles. It is not a Gentile institution; and when a Jewish person becomes a believer in Jesus, he or she does not become a Gentile. Nor, for that matter, is it an extension of Judaism. Gentiles are not transformed into Jews, nor do they become a new branch or extension of Judaism. The church is unique.¹³
 3. *It’s not as if the Jews have ingratiated themselves to Gentiles! One of the problems these rabbis [the reorganized rabbis in Tel Aviv under the Pharisee Yohanan ben Zakkai] after the AD 70 Destruction of Jerusalem] discussed was what to do about Jews who believed in Jesus and still attended the synagogue. Around 90 A.D the famous prayer called the Shemoneh Esrah was formulated in its Palestinian version. In a slightly different version, it is still prayed three times a day by orthodox Jews and always in the synagogue service on Shabbat. Petition twelve of the prayer reads as follows in the oldest version:
And for apostates let there be no hope; and may the insolent kingdom be quickly uprooted, in our days. And may the Nazarenes and the heretics perish quickly; and may they be erased from the Book of Life; and may they not be inscribed with the righteous. Blessed art thou, Lord, who humbles the insolent.
*Obviously, a Nazarene could not publicly pray this curse on himself. Therefore, it became impossible for any of them to remain in the synagogue life and worship. The inevitable parting of the ways had taken place. From 90 A.D. until today, therefore, the official attitude of Judaism, as defined by its own leadership, is that Jewish believers are not welcome as synagogue participants. Although they were always considered to be Jewish—a fact that is clear in Jewish religious law—they were to be viewed as “heretics.”¹⁴**
 4. *It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendours. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our*

¹³ McQuaid, 9.

¹⁴ Will Varner, “The Parting of the Ways,” *Israel My Glory*, February/March 1991, 10-11.

merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously—no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption. And our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feeling for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner—no mere tolerance or indulgence which parodies love as flippancy parodies merriment. Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses. If he is your Christian neighbour he is holy in almost the same way, for in him also Christ vere latitat ["truly hides"]—the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself, is truly hidden.-- The Weight of Glory by C.S. Lewis. Preached originally as a sermon in the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford, on June 8, 1942; published in THEOLOGY, November, 1941, and by the S.P.C.K., 1942

CONCLUSION:

I am part of the "Fellowship of the Unashamed." I have Holy Spirit Power. The die has been cast. I've stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I am finished and one with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tame visions, mundane talking, chintzy giving, and dwarfed goals! I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, positions, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by presence, learn by faith, love by patience, live by prayer, and labor by power. My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, diluted, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity. I won't give up, shut up, let go, or slow down until I've preached up, prayed up, paid up, stored up, and stayed up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till He stops. And when He comes to get His own, He'll have no problems recognizing me...my colors will be clear.-- Anonymously written: "The Fellowship of the Unashamed"

Timothy G. Walton
Alderwood Community Church
May 24, 2009